

From: Robinson, Kristen <Kristen.Robinson@lcmchealth.org>
Sent: Monday, October 8, 2018 2:32 PM
To: Young, Alison <ayoung@usatoday.com>
Subject: RE: USA TODAY interview request for Touro Infirmary

Hi Alison,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your inquiry and for allowing Touro Infirmary ("Touro") to comment on your flawed analysis of raw data.

While we are declining a phone interview, we hope that the written response below is helpful in your reporting. Touro is incredibly proud of the care that we provide to all of our patients. As a leader in women's health, we believe that our hospital and its providers are part of the solution to ensuring the best possible outcomes for mothers and babies, not the problem.

Touro is committed to excellence in providing all of our patients with a safe and healing environment. As one of the largest birthing hospitals in the State of Louisiana, providing the highest quality care to our maternal-child population is a top priority for our organization.

Specifically, in the realm of maternal-child care, Touro incorporates practice standards from, among others, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) and the California Maternal Quality Care Collaborative to establish best practices for patient care in our hospital. Our multidisciplinary team of physicians and leaders, many of whom have received special recognition for quality care, is continuously reviewing policies, systems and processes to ensure the best possible outcomes for our patients. For over 165 years, Touro has been the vanguard of medical excellence.

Your conclusions, based upon analysis of raw unvalidated data that has not been risk adjusted, are unsound and Touro declines to address specifically your resultant questions. Touro cares for a medically vulnerable population, including our maternity patients. Lifestyle diseases, the high cost of healthcare, delaying or non-compliance with medical treatment, limited care coordination, poor health, high rates of poverty and high rates of morbidity are all realities of our State and community.

As part of the Louisiana Perinatal Quality Collaborative ("LaPQC"), Touro is playing an active role to advance equity, implement best practices, and improve outcomes for women and newborns in Louisiana. Touro implements a variety of safety and quality improvement initiatives, including AIM program implementation designed to improve maternal outcomes. We are also proud to have one of Touro's practicing OB/GYNs serving as a physician advisor and subject matter expert on the LaPQC.

Touro was recognized as the "Best Hospital to Have a Baby" in a 2018 NOLA Family Magazine reader survey and is proud to have earned Louisiana's primary breastfeeding designation given by The Gift. The Gift designation, awarded by the Louisiana Department of Public Health, honors birthing facilities who improve hospital practices and policies that are aligned with the evidence-based, internationally recognized Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding of the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. Policy development, education of staff, patient education and provision of discharge resources for breastfeeding mothers are key components of the program. Touro is also a Baby-Friendly USA, Inc. designated facility. The implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative ("BFHI"), a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), encourages and recognizes hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies.

In an effort to help prospective parents find hospitals that deliver quality maternity care, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana announced that Touro has been designated as one of the first hospitals to receive the national Blue Distinction® Center+ for Maternity Care designation, a new designation under the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program. The Blue Distinction Centers for Maternity Care program evaluates hospitals on several quality measures, including the percentage of newborns that fall into the category of early elective delivery, an ongoing concern in the medical community.

Touro's Maternal Fetal Medicine Clinic is the first practice in New Orleans to be awarded Ultrasound Practice Accreditation by The Ultrasound Practice Accreditation Council of the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine in the areas of Obstetric - First Trimester, Obstetric - Second Trimester, and Obstetric - Third Trimester. Touro's Maternal Fetal Medicine Clinic achieved this recognition by meeting rigorous voluntary guidelines set by the diagnostic ultrasound profession. Touro's Women's Imaging Center has been designated as a Breast Imaging Center of Excellence by the American College of Radiology. Peer-review evaluations by board-certified physicians have determined that the Touro Women's Imaging Center achieved high practice standards in image quality, personnel qualifications, facility equipment, quality control procedures and quality assurance programs.

Touro also participates in studies and programs on national and local levels that encourage improved health for mothers and babies, before, during and after delivery. We are proud to be participating in the Babies' First Years Study in collaboration with the University of Michigan Research Center, to test the impact of income in the first three years of life, as well as the "Market Mommas Club", a breastfeeding incentive program for Medicaid-eligible women who intend to breastfeed or are early in their breastfeeding journey.

As identified in Touro's Community Health Needs Assessment, key community health priorities that Touro actively works to address are: 1) increasing access to healthcare and 2) resource awareness and health literacy. Both are especially important to our OB patient population. Touro works to meet these needs by:

- Operating Obstetrics and Gynecology clinics in some of the poorest and medically underserved neighborhoods, including the 7th Ward, 9th Ward and New Orleans East neighborhoods, as well as other secondary service area clinic locations, bringing access to care closer to the patient.
- Offering weekly childbirth education, which is free and open to the public including online educational offerings for those who find travel a barrier or prefer at-home education.
- Providing an OB Navigator available to support patients throughout pregnancy, serving as a point of contact for questions about classes, community resources, support during pregnancy and to help answer or find answers to any questions that patients may have.
- Providing prenatal education to all patients during their first obstetrics clinic appointment.

In addition to continuously working to ensure we are providing the highest quality of care for patients while in the hospital, we work in collaboration with community partners and local government agencies to address other contributing factors to maternal outcomes, including what happens before, during and after pregnancy, access to care, addressing social determinants, and Medicaid expansion.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to your inquiries and we trust that you will revisit your analysis and accurately report Touro's efforts to reverse socioeconomic factors that adversely affect the health of our mothers and babies. Thank you for your reporting on these important women's health issues.

Kristen

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